1: Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

2

Toward us came Tenye, a young friend of last year, and two small boys. She had seemed but a child the year before when she had danced bandamba with the other little girls while the men were getting ready for the Kromanti dance. But now she looked quite grown, and instead of the small apron she had worn, was wearing a cloth of a woman.

"You've grown, Tenye."

"*Ay, a kisi bobbi kaba*," one of the youngsters said. "She has her breasts already," and he went on to say that soon she would marry. "Two moons more," he said, showing two fingers.

"You will soon have many bracelets, Tenye, and when you dance you will be splendid."

"Ai," the boy went on speaking eagerly, "Abane will teach us how to dance when he comes back. He went to the French shore. Abane made Tenye, and he made me, too. I am Yamati, and he made Sabape, here." But they had not the same mother, nor did they live in the same village. "When I grow up," the child went on, "I will dance with seed rattles at my ankles. I will dance like Abane." The rattles his uncles would have to buy for him, or when grown he might buy them for himself, but his father would give him his gods when he was of age, and good dancing, too, was a thing of the gods.

"Who will get Abane's seed rattles, Tenye? Will you get them because you are the oldest child of the first wife?"

"Ah, no!" both she and the indomitable Yamati exclaimed at the same moment, and then both lowered their heads and would say no more, while the small Sabape looked away.

Now we had the year before discovered why we were so often met by young and old with the phrases, "I do not know," or better still, "*Massa Gadu sabi*—God alone knows," when it was evident that the speakers knew the answer very well indeed. The reason lay with the will of the G'an Yorka, or the G'an Zombi, or the Nana, as the ancestors are variously called. The ancestors it seemed had long

/133 cont./

866 made for sale, the guardian gives him a small sum out of the
461 money gained. At 14 an adolescent begins to satisfy nearly all
434 his own needs.

For example, from June to December, 1956, Tasa (14
• 883 years), son of Fintiman (Boniville) had earned about 13,000
465 francs:

June	helped his father build a large boat for the administration (45 days)	6,000
October	went to Saint-Laurent as auxiliary bossman .	3,000
December	helped convoy a boat of the border-fixing mission sent back empty to Maripasoula . .	4,000
		13,000

882 His father, entrusted with his education, let him use this
868 money in his own way; he pointed out to us with pride that for the first time in 1956 his son had been able to satisfy all his own needs, but that it was important to keep him under a firm hand until he was capable of doing a man's work alone: for that, five or six years of apprenticeship would not be too much.

868 In fact, many times we had the chance to verify it, it is
561 in this prolonged apprenticeship that are developed the seriousness
[153] of mind and the technical skill so remarkable among the Refugee Blacks. At 20 years, most of them still do not know how to do
[582] anything worthwhile, and it is scarcely before 25 or 27 that they
[178] become capable of /134/ painstaking work; in this respect the present tendency of the young boys toward precocious emancipation (the marriage age of men is going down to 20 and even 18 years) runs the risk of having very unfortunate consequences for the future of the Refugee Blacks.

429 The person charged with the education of a girl exercises
[582] the powers of a mother toward her. It is she who authorizes her to marry, and by giving her the pagi, married women's
[583] garment, gives her symbolically her freedom as a woman. It is to her that the first husband pays the price of the virginity of the girl.

/146 cont./

882 Whereas little girls before puberty are left free to come
[858] and go, older girls are the object of constant surveillance.
They are always under the surveillance of one of their near
[883] relatives specifically designated. If they have permission to
go dancing in another village, they must present themselves
upon arrival to an uncle, an aunt, an older brother who will
watch over them all evening.

Sometimes they build for a girl a little house where she sleeps alone ... but she is double-locked into it for the night.

[883] At nightfall, when their mothers are busy with the preparation of the meal, the girls are sent to get water or to angle for fish; there is wavering in the surveillance, and seducers know how to profit by it.

[593] Until recent times girls were held by their mothers in
[584] the bonds of a strict authority, and although engaged very
[582] young, they were not authorized to marry before reaching
complete physical development.

584 It often used to happen that a girl might be promised by her mother to a man from her first years (they still say, although that is no longer practiced, pɔti mɔfu na umã, "to put his mouth on a girl," meaning by that to have received a promise of marriage). This plan always used to remain subject to the girl's assent when she grew up and did not constitute a contract, strictly-speaking; it did not involve any payment or compensa-
[593] tion whatever. A girl could not be obligated to a marriage which was absolutely displeasing to her, but the mother's authority was great enough to make these marriages come about in most cases.

[431] If a girl had not been promised, the young man who wanted to marry her used to try to attract her attention during a dance and to exchange a few words with her. /147/ Later he would give her a paddle bearing symbols of fecundity and the representation of a house and a boat. If the girl accepted the paddle, he could propose to her officially.

/147 cont./

848 If the girl is pregnant, the man may not abandon her: that would make a great to-do between the two kin groups: he must stay with her at least until the birth of the child.

883 836 178 [582] Nowadays among the Boni things tend to happen completely otherwise than custom makes provision for. The general opinion is that girls can no longer be held down, that they escape more and more from the authority of their mothers; many of them begin to run wild at about 14 or 15, and people are obliged to marry them off precipitately at 15 or 16. It is difficult to say what the proportion of these hasty marriages is, but the recriminations heard on all sides on the subject of the shamelessness of girls give the idea that it is increasing. In the [582] [848] villages on the French bank, out of nine girls married in 1958 there were only four marriages concluded according to regulations; the five others had been arranged hastily either because the girl was pregnant (two cases) or because she had laid herself open to scandal. /148/

582 Nearly all girls married between 1952 and 1956 were 15 to 17 years old.

584 This is about how things happen:

A man who is attracted by a girl tries to exchange a few [537] words with her unknown to her mother. There are special forms for these declarations. One speaks in a low voice, very fast, using special formulas. This is how one of our boatmen, one evening in October, 1952, addressed young Lomé, age 15, of Boniville village, who had gotten away from her mother on the pretext of going to get water for us.

584 539 "Woman, I love thee, I wish to live with thee, I wish to marry thee. That which God put in me I cannot take away (1).

1. Which means: I cannot change, you must take me as I am.